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PLAYBOY INTERVIEW:

FIDEL CASTRO

a candid conversation with the bellicose dictator of communist cuba

Fidel, a tall, tempestuous, charismatic, and continuing prime mover of the Cuban revolution, may be the most hated dictator in the Western Hemisphere, but he is his country's indispensable man, a ubiquitous despot who supplies the energy for nearly every phase of contemporary Cuban life. Besides holding the posts of prime minister, secretary of the Communist Party and commander in chief of the armed forces, Castro is placed himself in charge of the country's cultural program and spends much of his time studying the uses of several theories of cattle breeding as he dogmatically reads Marxist-Leninist texts. Working an average of 18 to 20 hours each day, he is always on the move: inspecting farmlands, mediating disputes, expounding ideology and, above all, exhorting his people to harder work, greater sacrifices—and intransigent animosity toward everything American. Despite the ever-present threat of assassination, he despises caution and mingles impulsively with the masses throughout the island, often to the dismay of his bodyguards.

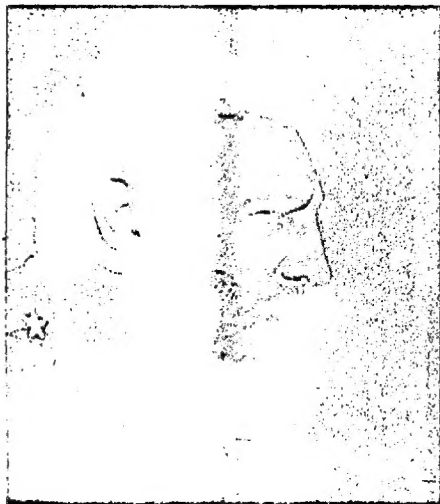
Although the negative aspects of his regime are heavily emphasized in the American press, just as propagandistic blasts against American life are trumpeted in Cuba, Castro's revolution has achieved some undeniable reforms affecting the lives of the peasants and the proletariat. It has virtually wiped out illiteracy, provided free education and medical care for all, instituted revisions of land and rent laws, and claims to have

achieved a higher standard of living for the masses, whose support was instrumental in sweeping him to power. There is no one at large and alive in Cuba today, either in the zealous cadre of revolutionaries that surrounds him or among the Cuban people, who is capable of opposing Castro. He is larger than life size; his image dominates Cuba. For better or worse, he is contemporary Cuba.

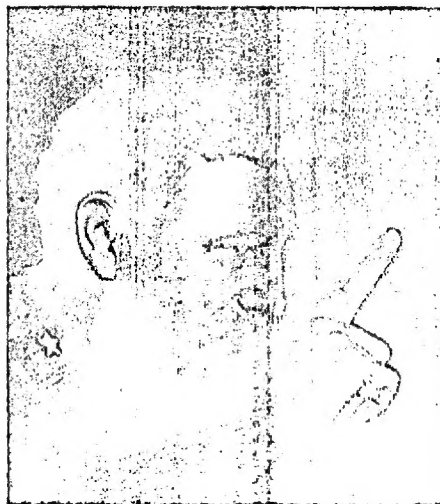
Castro's comfortable beginnings hardly intimated that he would become the eventual leader of a Marxist-oriented revolution—and an enemy of democratic freedom. Born in 1927, the son of a wealthy Galician immigrant sugar-plantation owner in Oriente province, he attended a Jesuit high school before entering Havana University, where he studied law. Although he did not become a Marxist until later, it was here that he first encountered the writings of Marx and Engels. As a student, he spoke out against the corrupt administration of then-President Carlos Prío Socarrás and discovered that his fiery oratory could sway audiences. After graduation he began his law practice—and soon joined the Orodoxos, a left-of-center political reform party that nominated him in 1952 for a seat in the national congress. The scheduled election, which would also have chosen a new president, never took place: On March 10, 1952, former President Fulgencio Batista, prevented by Cuban law from seeking re-election, led a successful coup d'état against the Socarrás government and installed himself as the absolute dictator of Cuba. The

salient dates of Batista's regime soon surfaced: The democratic constitution of 1940 was abrogated; civil liberties were drastically curtailed; government fiscal corruption increased; and over 100,000 dissenters exposed themselves to the terrors of terror and torture.

Believing that a national uprising against Batista, Castro spearheaded an assault by 25 young men and women on the Moncada military barracks in Santiago, the island's second largest city. The attack failed, but its date—July 26, 1953—became the rallying cry of Castro's revolutionary movement ("26 de Julio") and the subject of a four-hour defense speech at his trial—"History Will Absolve Me"—its message. After serving only a small portion of their sentences, he and his followers were released from the Isle of Pines prison (the same one, ironically, in which the most eminent anti-Castro revolutionaries are now jailed) and exiled to Mexico. It was Batista's biggest mistake. In the pre-dawn hours of November 25, 1956, Castro and 82 followers, pursued by Mexican police, boarded a boat and set sail for Cuba. Eight days later they landed on the southern coast of Oriente province, where he and five companions survived a government ambush and escaped into the mountains. "Are we in the Sierra Maestra?" he reportedly asked the first peasant he saw. "Yes! Then the revolution has been won!" Castro was soon joined by the other survivors of the government attack, and together they recruited enough peasants in the area to



"I believe that the United States, with its imperialist foreign policy, is accelerating the radicalization process of revolutionary movements not only in Cuba but throughout the world."



"An enemy of socialism cannot write in our newspapers—but we don't deny it, and we don't go around proclaiming a hypothetical freedom of the press where there is no such thing."



"If you ask me whether I consider myself a revolutionary at the time I was in the mountains, I would answer yes. If you ask me whether I consider myself a revolutionary now, I would answer yes."

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form, a small and disorganized fighting force, further augmented by defectors from Batista's army.

His ensuing campaign against overwhelming government forces is a lesson in guerrilla warfare. Defeated psychologically almost before he was engaged militarily, Batista stunned the world on January 1, 1959, by fleeing the island; in anticipation of possible defeat, he had planned and financed his departure well in advance. Within days, Castro and his guerrillas entered Havana and formally took control of the country. The uncomplicated informality of life in the Sierra Maestra did not smoothly adapt to Havana, however, and revolutionary enthusiasm proved a poor substitute for administrative experience. Castro's accession to power was marked by chaos. Colossal follies and atrocities were committed. Large sums of money were dissipated, stolen or mishandled, and a public blood bath in which thousands of Batista supporters were executed shocked and dismayed the outside world.

It soon became apparent that Castro's ideology was far more radical than most had suspected. Sweeping decrees rocked the middle and upper classes from their privileged positions. Castro's dictatorship summarily and illegally expropriated ownership of Cuba's cattle, sugar and tobacco industries, banks, oil refineries and resort facilities from all American and other overseas business interests; formed cooperatives; divided large landholdings among the peasants. And in December 1961, Castro betrayed the democratic promises of his early administration when he proclaimed to a screaming multitude in Havana, "I am a Marxist-Leninist and will be one until the day I die!" Four years later, Castro formally changed the name of Cuba's United Socialist Party to the Cuban Communist Party, complete with 100-man Central Committee and 11-man Politburo. By then, U.S.-Cuban relations had long since passed the political point of no return.

On April 17, 1961, came the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion, a humiliating defeat for the U.S. and a historic victory for Castro's forces. Eighteen months later, on the pretext of defending his country from another U.S. attack, Castro persuaded Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to install offensive atomic missiles on Cuban soil, thus precipitating the seven-day Missile Crisis that brought the world's two most powerful nations to an "eye-ball-to-eye-ball" confrontation (in Dean Rusk's words) and thereby to the brink of thermonuclear war. When Moscow, under U.S. pressure, prudently removed the missiles, Castro's price for that "affront" was more than enough Soviet matériel and training to provide Cuba with what is probably the best-equipped military establishment in Latin America. Since the Missile Crisis, Castro's

crippling American blockade, the loss of diplomatic relations with the rest of Latin America (except Mexico) and a variety of other political, economic and military ills and pressures. At the same time, she has maintained at least the appearance of a belligerent degree of ideological independence from her benefactor and ally, the Soviet Union. Early last year, at a Tricontinental Congress held in Havana, Cuba attempted to assume the leadership of revolutionary movements in the emerging nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Castro proposed that all Socialist countries commit themselves to material support of revolutions throughout the world. To the limited extent that Cuba's economy permits, he has since backed up his words with warlike action: Cuban-supplied weapons have turned up in at least four South American nations, and the aid, arms and expertise Cuba offers Communists within other Latin-American nations is a matter of constant concern to their governments and to our State Department.

Castro's Communist regime could not have survived this long without the Soviet Union's military and financial backing. But it must also be recognized that enough of Cuba's 7,336,000 people have either supported or paid lip service to Castro's dictatorship to keep him in power—despite eight years of internal hardship, the counterrevolutionary campaigns of 1962 and 1963, the sectarian disputes within his own party, the disparity between promised goals and actual progress to date, the exodus of hundreds of thousands of dissident Cubans to the U.S., and the severe economic shortages that continue to plague the country. Whether putative gains from his leadership will offset Cuba's past blunders, present bellicosity, and the drastic curtailment of individual freedom imposed by its new ideology, whether history will ultimately "absolve" Castro as he prophesies, are questions for posterity. This much, however, is clear: He is one of the most feared political figures of our time, and as such, he wields a power disproportionate to the size of his tiny island nation.

Not the least logical of reasons for this fear in the U.S. is ignorance of Castro's own view of himself and his goals, of his role in world politics, of his aspirations for his country, his personal motivations for the stormy course on which he is embarked—and for this lack, the American press and he himself are not blameless. Of propagandistic boasts, as of pro-Communist and anti-U.S. diatribes, there has been more than enough. But Castro has been elusively chary of interviews by members of the American press, perhaps because the majority may be presumed to be something less than objective. It was PLAYBOY's

—despite the obvious it might contain—would do much to clarify the thoughts and action at work behind the Cuban curtain, and help to illuminate a darkly threatening presence in our hemisphere.

To this end, we contacted old Havana hand and author-journalist Lee Lockwood, who had already been granted an audience with Castro as preparation for a forthcoming book, "Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel," to be published by Macmillan in March, and of which an expanded version of this interview will be one part. When the two met at Castro's Isle of Pines home, the result was the longest and most revealing conversation the Cuban leader has ever held with a member of the American press.

Lounging at a card table on the veranda in his green fatigues, wearing socks but no boots, his hair matted, and smoking a succession of long Cuban cigars, the Cuban dictator spoke with Lockwood volubly and inexhaustibly—often through the night and into the dawn. At the end of a week, their conversations (conducted in Spanish) had filled nearly 25 hours of tape.

"An interview with Castro," writes Lockwood, "is an extraordinary experience, and until you get used to it, an unnerving one. Unless you stand your ground, it's seldom a conversation at all, but more like an extended monolog with occasional questions from the audience. When replying to a question, he would usually begin in a deceptively detached, conversational tone of voice, with his eyes fixed on the table, while his hands fidgeted compulsively with a lighter, a ballpoint pen or anything else at hand. As he warmed to his subject, Castro would start to squirm and swivel in his chair. The rhythm of his discourse would slowly quicken, and at the same time he would begin drawing closer to me little by little, pulling his chair with him each time, until—having started out at right angles to my chair—he would finally be seated almost alongside me. His foot, swinging spasmodically beneath the table, would touch my foot, then withdraw. Then his knee would wedge against mine as he leaned still closer, oblivious of all but the point he was making, his voice becoming steadily more insistent. As he bent forward, his hands would move gracefully out and back in emphatic cadence with his words, then begin reaching toward me, tapping my knee to punctuate a sentence, prodding my chest with an emphatic forefinger, still in the same hypnotizing rhythm. Finally, I would become aware of his dark-brown eyes, glittering in the frame of his tangled beard, peering fervently into my own eyes, in true Latin style, from only inches away as he continued speaking. He would remain thus sometimes for as long as a quarter of an hour, fixing me

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with his messianic gaze."

Regarding the frankness of the Cuban leader's replies, *Los Angeles Times* writes: "Naturally, you cannot expect a man in Castro's position to answer every question for publication as openly as if he were having a private chat with a friend. Nevertheless, as one who has spent a good deal of time in Cuba, I believe that his answers were generally honest—however ideologically inimical his views."

PLAYBOY: When you came to power in 1959, did you think that Cuba and the U.S. were going to get along better than they actually have?

CASTRO: Yes; that was one of my illusions. At that time, we believed that the revolutionary program could be carried out with a great degree of comprehension on the part of the people of the United States. We believed that because it was just, it would be accepted. True, we didn't think about the Government of the United States. We thought about the people of the United States, that in some way their opinion would influence the decisions of the Government. What we didn't see clearly was that the North American interests affected by the revolution possessed the means to bring about a change of public opinion in the United States and to distort everything that was happening in Cuba and present it to the U.S. public in the worst form.

PLAYBOY: Is that why you went to the United States in April of that year?

CASTRO: Precisely—in an effort to keep public opinion in the United States better informed and better disposed toward the revolution in the face of the tremendous campaign that was being waged against us. When I went to the U.S., I had practically no contact with the Government. It was with public opinion.

PLAYBOY: You did meet with Vice-President Nixon, though.

CASTRO: Yes. But my trip was not an official one. I had been invited by an organization of editors. There were some—I would say—"acts of protocol," however, because diplomatic relations were being maintained. There was a luncheon with the then Secretary of State [Christian Herter—*Ed.*] and an invitation to speak with some Senators. Nixon, too, wanted to talk with me; we had a long conversation. He has written his version of that talk, and he maintains that from then on he came to the conclusion that I was a dangerous character.

PLAYBOY: Did the subsequent hostility of the American Government have much to do with creating a receptive atmosphere for communism in Cuba?

CASTRO: I think so, in the same way that the friendly acts of the Soviet Union also helped. The connections we established with the U.S.S.R. in 1960 very much matured the minds of both the people and the leaders of the revolution. Un-

doubtedly, it taught us something we had not clearly understood at the beginning. The only thing that could help to make our own revolution, were none other than those countries that had recently had their own. We had an opportunity to see what proletarian internationalism was, to learn that it was something more than a phrase; we saw it in deeds.

PLAYBOY: Yet some observers have characterized your development as a Communist as having been largely a series of reactions on your part to a series of hostile acts by the U.S.; that is, that the U.S., in effect, forced you and Cuba into the Communist camp.

CASTRO: The United States, with its imperialist foreign policy, constitutes part of the contemporary circumstances that make revolutionaries out of people everywhere. It is not the only cause, but it is certainly one of the many factors. It can be said that the policy of the United States is accelerating the radicalization process of revolutionary movements not only in Cuba but throughout the world.

PLAYBOY: Do you think that you personally would have become a Communist in any case, that U.S. actions and attitudes only hastened the process?

CASTRO: It could be said that just as the United States was then and had to continue being imperialistic, we were destined inevitably to become Communists.

PLAYBOY: Were you personally a Communist when you seized power in 1959?

CASTRO: It is possible that I appeared less radical than I really was at that time. It is also possible that I was more radical than even I myself knew. Nobody can say that he reaches certain political conclusions except through a process. Nobody reaches those convictions in a day, often not in a year. Long before I became a Marxist, my first questionings of an economic and social kind arose when I was a student at the university, studying political economy and especially capitalist economics—the problems posed by overproduction and the struggle between the workers and the machines. They aroused my attention extraordinarily and led me to turn my mind to these problems for the first time. How could there exist a conflict between man's technical possibilities and his needs for happiness, and why did it have to exist? How could there be overproduction of some goods, causing unemployment and hunger? Why did there have to be a contradiction between the interests of man and of the machine, when the machine should be man's great aid, precisely that aid which could free him from privation, misery and want?

In this way, I began to think of different forms of the organization of production and of property, although in a completely idealistic way, without any scientific basis. You might say that I had begun to transform myself into a kind of

utopian Socialist. At that time I had not read the Communist Manifesto. I had read it only after I had returned to Cuba, in the second or third year of law. Later on, I did read the Manifesto, and it made a deep impression on me; for the first time I saw a historical, systematic explanation of the problem, phrased in a very militant way that captivated me completely.

In the succeeding years, I read a number of works by Marx, Engels and Lenin that gave me many additional theoretical insights. This encounter with revolutionary ideas helped me orient myself politically. But there is a big difference between having a theoretical knowledge and considering oneself a Marxist revolutionary. Unquestionably, I had a rebellious temperament and at the same time felt a great intellectual curiosity about those problems. Those insights inclined me more and more toward political struggle. However, I still could not have been considered a true Marxist.

PLAYBOY: Did you become one as a result of Batista's *coup d'état*?

CASTRO: No, but I already had some very definite political ideas about the need for structural changes. Before the *coup*, I had been thinking of utilizing legal means, of using the Parliament as a point of departure from which I might establish a revolutionary platform and motivate the masses in its favor—not as a means of bringing about those changes directly. I was now convinced that it could be done only in a revolutionary way. I had acquired enough sense of reality to understand that.

Nonetheless, I was still in some ways ingenuous and deluded. In many ways I was still not a Marxist, and I did not consider myself a Communist. In spite of having read theoretically about imperialism as a phenomenon, I didn't understand it very well. I didn't thoroughly appreciate the relation that existed between the phenomenon of imperialism and the situation in Cuba. It is possible that I was then still very much influenced by the habits and ideas of the *petit bourgeois* education I had received. As the son of a landowner, educated in a Jesuit secondary school, I had brought nothing more than a rebellious temperament and the uprightness, the severe character that they had inculcated in me in the Jesuit school. When I graduated from the university, I still didn't have a very good political training. Even so, one might say that I had advanced extraordinarily, since I had been a political illiterate when I entered the university.

In fact, my political consciousness was already much greater than that of the political party with which I had been associated during my student years. That party, which had begun from very popular origins, had, over a period of years, been falling into the hands of landowners and opportunistic politicians;

most of the country its apparatus was in the hands of reactionary and rightist elements. In the bosom of that party, although completely outside the party machinery, I had gained some ascendancy among the masses, a certain influence that opened the path for me to candidacy and election as a deputy from the province of Havana. I succeeded in gathering almost 80,000 addresses and, using the parliamentary mailing privilege, since I didn't have money for stamps, I sent out tens of thousands of letters every month. In this way I was able to gain enough support from the masses to be elected a delegate to the party assembly.

Already I was working with the fervent passion of a revolutionary. For the first time, I conceived a strategy for the revolutionary seizure of power. Once in the Parliament, I would break party discipline and present a program embracing practically all the measures which, since the victory of the revolution, have been transformed into laws. I knew that such a program would never be approved in a Parliament the great majority of whose members were mouthpieces of the landowners and the big Cuban and foreign businesses. But I hoped, by proposing a program that recognized the most deeply felt aspirations of the majority, to establish a revolutionary platform around which to mobilize the great masses of farmers, workers, unemployed, teachers, intellectual workers and other progressive sectors of the country.

When Batista's *coup d'état* took place, everything changed radically. My idea then became not to organize a movement but to try to unite all the different forces against Batista. I intended to participate in that struggle simply as one more soldier. I began to organize the first action cells, hoping to work alongside those leaders of the party who might be ready to fulfill the elemental duty of fighting against Batista. All I wanted was a rifle and orders to carry out any mission whatsoever. I wore myself out looking for a chief; but when none of these leaders showed that they had either the ability or the resolution or the seriousness of purpose or the way to overthrow Batista, it was then that I finally worked out a strategy of my own.

We had no money. But I said to my associates that we didn't have to import weapons from the outside, that our weapons were here, well oiled and cared for—in the stockades of Batista. It was to get hold of some of those weapons that we attacked the Moncada Barracks. **PLAYBOY:** What was your political stance at that time?

CASTRO: My political ideas then were expressed in my speech, "History Will Absolve Me," to the court during our trial after the Moncada attack. Even then I analyzed the class composition of our society, the need to mobilize the work-

ers, the farmers, the unemployed, the teachers, the intellectual workers and the small proprietors against the Batista regime. Even then I proposed a program of planned development for our economy, utilizing all the resources of the country to promote its economic development. My Moncada speech was the seed of all the things that were done later on. It could be called Marxist if you wish, but probably a true Marxist would have said that it was not. Unquestionably, though, it was an advanced revolutionary program. And that program was openly proclaimed.

PLAYBOY: Weren't you jeopardizing your survival, and hence the success of your plans, by openly advocating the violent overthrow of the government?

CASTRO: Not really. In Cuba, people had been talking so long about revolution and revolutionary programs that the ruling classes paid no attention anymore. They believed that ours was simply one more program, that all revolutionaries change and become conservatives with the passage of time. As a matter of fact, the opposite has happened to me. With the passing of time my thought has become more and more radical.

PLAYBOY: Was Che Guevara, your former finance minister, in any way a political mentor of yours during this period? Did he help you shape your present convictions about Marxism-Leninism?

CASTRO: I didn't know Che Guevara when I attacked the Moncada, when I wrote "History Will Absolve Me" or when I read the *Communist Manifesto* and the works of Lenin in the university. At the time I met Che, I believe that he had a greater revolutionary development, ideologically speaking, than I had. From the theoretical point of view, he was more formed; he was a more advanced revolutionary than I was. But in those days, these were not the questions we talked about. What we discussed was the fight against Batista, the plan for landing in Cuba and for beginning guerrilla warfare. There is no doubt, however, that he has influenced both the revolutionary fight and the revolutionary process.

PLAYBOY: There has been widespread speculation in the American press, since Guevara's mysterious disappearance last year, that he was executed at your orders. Is this true?

CASTRO: Those who write such stories will have to square their accounts with history. The truth is that Che is alive and well. I and his family and his friends receive letters from him often. We do not have anything to say about his whereabouts at this time, however, because it would be unwise, possibly unsafe for him. When he is ready and wants it to be known where he is, we will tell it first to the Cuban people, who have the right to know. Until then, there is nothing more to be said.

PLAYBOY: You were with Guevara in the

Sierra Maestra, when you began to organize your forces against Batista. Had you become a Communist by that time? **CASTRO:** I was in no way a Communist, or infiltrated agent, if that's what you mean. But if you ask me whether I considered myself a revolutionary at the time I was in the mountains, I would answer yes, I considered myself a revolutionary. If you ask me, did I consider myself a Marxist-Leninist. I would say no, I did not yet consider myself a Marxist-Leninist. If you ask me whether I considered myself a Communist, a classic Communist, I would say no, I did not yet consider myself a classic Communist. But today, yes, I believe I have that right. I have come full circle. Today I see clearly that in the modern world, nobody can call himself a true revolutionary who is not a Marxist-Leninist.

PLAYBOY: If you had openly espoused a Communist program while you were still in the Sierra Maestra, do you think you would still have been able to come to power?

CASTRO: That is not an easy question to answer. Possibly not. Certainly it would not have been intelligent to bring about such an open confrontation. To have declared a radical program at that moment would have resulted in aligning against the revolution all the country's most reactionary forces, which were then divided. It would have caused the formation of a solid front among Batista, the ruling classes and the North American imperialists [whose vast Cuban landholdings and multimillion-dollar business interests he planned to nationalize —Ed.]. They would have called finally upon the troops of the United States to occupy the country. With no possibility of receiving any outside help, this would have constituted a complex of forces virtually impossible to overcome with the forces we then had.

In any case, the people's revolutionary consciousness was much lower then than it was to be when we finally came to power. In those days, there existed many popular prejudices against communism. Most people did not know what it really was. They had no other idea of communism than what the enemies of communism told them about it. They endured misery, but they did not know the real causes of that misery; they didn't have, nor could they have had, a scientific explanation of these problems; they could not understand that they were problems of social structure. You must remember that more than 1,000,000 persons in our country, adults, didn't know how to read or write. You could not have expected the great mass of the people to have had a level of culture high enough to comprehend those problems. Naturally, in these circumstances, to have said that our program was Marxist-Leninist or Communist would have awakened many prejudices. And many people would not

have understood what it really meant. But at the same time, while we were learning, the people were also learning. Through the same process by which we, the leaders, became more revolutionary, the people became more revolutionary. **PLAYBOY:** But when you did eventually announce that you had become a Communist—three years after seizing power—it took most Cubans by surprise. Isn't it true that many of those who supported you while you were in the mountains, especially those from the middle and upper classes, did so on the basis of the comparatively moderate reform program you had announced, and that they wouldn't have had anything to do with you had they foreseen that after only a few years in power, you would announce that *Fidelismo* was really communism?

CASTRO: Most of those middle-class and upper-class people were opposed to the revolution long before that date. One of the first laws that the revolution passed—in 1959—was the lowering of rents, and that law affected a good number of great property owners who lived lavishly on the rents they received from their holdings. Of course, the revolution compensated them, but the law affected them. Many of those people began to feel dissatisfaction with the revolution. That same year, the Agrarian Reform Law was passed; this also affected them. Also, many other laws were passed relating to mortgage loans, debts, etc.—a whole series of social laws that very much affected the interests of the middle class. So they became disaffected because the revolution passed laws affecting their interests as an exploiting class, not because the revolution made a political proclamation.

PLAYBOY: In your speech at the Moncada trial, you promised free elections, a free press, respect for private enterprise, the restoration of the 1940 Constitution, and many other democratic reforms when you came to power. Isn't that correct?

CASTRO: That is true, because that was our program at that moment. Every revolutionary movement, in every historical epoch, proposes the greatest number of achievements possible. We would have been deluding ourselves to have attempted at that moment to do more than we did. But no program implies a renunciation of new revolutionary stages, of new objectives that may pre-empt the old. An initial program can set forth the immediate objectives of a revolution, but not all the objectives, not the ultimate objectives. During the subsequent years of prison, of exile, of war in the mountains, the alignment of forces changed so extraordinarily in favor of our movement that we could set goals that were much more ambitious.

PLAYBOY: Yes, but to return to our original question: Wouldn't you admit that many of those middle- and upper-class Cubans who followed you because they

CASTRO: I told no lies in the Moncada speech. That was how we thought at the moment; those were the honest goals we set ourselves. But we have since gone beyond that program and are carrying out a much more profound revolution.

PLAYBOY: In the five years since you announced the true nature of the revolution and began to institute its sweeping social changes, several hundred thousand Cubans have renounced their country and fled to the United States. If the revolution is really for the good of the people, how do you account for this mass exodus?

CASTRO: There were many different reasons. Many of those who emigrated were declassed, *Lumpen* elements who had lived from gambling, prostitution, drug traffic and other illicit activities before the revolution. They have gone with their vices to Miami and other cities in the United States, because they couldn't adapt themselves to a society that has eradicated those social ills. Before the revolution, many stringent requirements were imposed on people applying for emigration to the United States; but after the revolution, even such unsavory parasites as these were admitted for the asking. All they had to do was say they were against communism.

Others of the emigrants were those with a very clear class position, who had been in the forefront against any change in social structure and felt themselves tricked when changes came about. Even though we had proclaimed them in our initial program, they didn't believe we would implement them, either because they had gotten used to changes never occurring or because they thought such changes would not be possible in Cuba because they would affect the American interests, and that any government that tried this was destined to be rapidly swept away. Others left out of opportunism, because they believed that if a great many of their class left, the revolution wouldn't last very long. Some also left out of fear of war or from personal insecurity. There were even some who left after a whole series of revolutionary laws had been passed, when counterrevolutionaries spread a rumor that a new law was going to be passed that would take away the right of parents to bring up their own children. This absurd campaign succeeded in convincing many people, especially those who already had a lot of doubts. They sent their children out of the country and later left themselves. They had no alternative, once their children were in the United States, for they were not permitted to bring them back.

There were also many cases of emigration that had nothing to do with politics. There have always been people who wanted to leave Cuba and live in a coun-

try with a much higher standard of living. Before the revolution, many people had worked for North American businesses such as banks, refineries, the electric company, the telephone company—a certain working-class aristocracy with better salaries than the rest of the workers—and some of them were attracted by the North American way of life and wanted to live like a middle-class family in the United States. Naturally, that wasn't the case with those who did the hardest and poorest-paid work, like the cutting of sugar cane. It would be interesting to know how many sugar-cane workers have gone to the United States. It would be very difficult to find any.

PLAYBOY: If there had been active opposition to the revolution from the middle and upper classes, do you think you might have lost?

CASTRO: I don't think so. It would have been a longer struggle, more violent, keener from the beginning; but, together with the poor peasants and the workers, we would have overthrown Batista even if he had had their solid support.

PLAYBOY: Given Batista's vast superiority of troops and armaments—with or without middle- and upper-class support—some American military strategists feel you could have been defeated if it hadn't been for his ineptitude. Do you think that's true?

CASTRO: Unquestionably, if Batista had been a wiser and a braver man, a man of different characteristics, he would have been able to instill more spirit in his soldiers. Instead, he tried to ignore the war, following the tactic of minimizing the importance of our force, believing that any gesture of his, such as visiting the front, would have meant giving more political importance to our movement. By leading his troops more skillfully, he could have prolonged the war, but he would not have won it. He would have lost just the same, and not long after.

He had his only opportunity right at the beginning, when we were few and inexperienced. By the time we had gained a knowledge of the terrain and had increased our force to a little more than 100 armed men, there was already no way of destroying us with a professional army. The only way he could have contained us then would have been by fighting us with an army of peasants from the mountains where we were operating. For that, it would have been necessary to obtain the genuine support of the exploited peasant class. But how could he have gained that support? An army that served the landowners would never have been able to get the exploited farmers on their side. Only a revolutionary movement can organize that force. It is our thesis that a revolutionary movement, no guerrilla movement that is supported by the peasant population can be defeated—unless, of

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You know, people in the United States seem to spend a great deal of time writing elaborate literary works about how the revolution could have been prevented or defeated. This means that most of them are simply as counterrevolutionaries; they feel a genuine terror of revolutions and prefer intermediate formulas. We cannot agree with that reactionary point of view. At the present time, the major concern of the United States seems to be to find a way by which revolutions outside of the United States can be avoided. Unquestionably, the United States today represents the most reactionary ideas in the world. And I think that they cause grave danger both to the world and to the people of the United States themselves.

PLAYBOY: What do you mean by "reactionary ideas"?

CASTRO: I mean especially its self-appointed role of world gendarme, its desire to impose outside its frontiers the kind of government system it thinks other states and other peoples should have. The fact that the United States was itself at one time in the revolutionary avant-garde and had established the best and the most advanced political institutions of its time is one of the historical factors that greatly contributed to the eminence and development of that country. That, plus the natural advantages of being situated in an extraordinarily rich territory. Many North Americans still hark back to 1776, declaring that theirs is still a progressive country. But this is to pretend that the realities of the world and ideas have not changed in 200 years. The fact is that they have changed profoundly.

Apart from this, although the United States arose as a nation based on the most revolutionary political principles of its time, this doesn't mean that its history has been characterized by a profound humanism. As a matter of fact, capitalist society deforms individuals greatly. It entangles them in an egotistical struggle for existence. What is the philosophical foundation of free enterprise? That the most competent, the most able, the most audacious will triumph. Success is the goal of each individual. And he has to achieve it in competition, in a war to the death with everybody else, in a pitiless struggle for existence. Capitalism presupposes that men are moved exclusively by material interests. It assumes that man is capable of acting rightly and correctly only when he can derive an advantage or a profit from it.

PLAYBOY: Isn't that a misleading oversimplification?

CASTRO: I don't think so. In your country, the majority of people do have an opportunity to study and to work; but the majority do not have the best opportunities for study, the best opportunities for work or for genuine participation in

community of the country. There are many who are born destined to be presidents of companies or already occupying privileged places in the society. Under capitalism there is a much higher productivity of work, a much greater social yield, and much better living conditions than there were under feudalism; but without the slightest doubt, they are far inferior to the conditions of life that socialism permits.

For example, even though the Northern part of the United States, directed by Lincoln, struggled successfully for the liberation of the slaves, discrimination has endured there for a century and today still takes its toll in the blood of Negro citizens of the U.S. Why don't you ask yourselves whether perhaps a relation doesn't exist between racial discrimination and the egoistic feelings that are developed under capitalism? Why hasn't the United States been able to eradicate discrimination? It is because racial discrimination and the economic exploitation of man by man are two things intimately joined.

PLAYBOY: If that's so, why have there been reports of discrimination against Cuba's Negro population by the white majority?

CASTRO: That was true before the revolution, but since the revolution all racial discrimination has disappeared, along with the exploitation of man by man—a lesson you could profit from. I don't say this with the intention of hurting anybody or of wounding the feelings of the North American public. I am simply reasoning and meditating on this subject. I don't consider any people evil. What I do consider evil are certain systems that inculcate feelings of hatred in people.

PLAYBOY: Is it your conviction, then, that the U.S. would be better off under socialism or communism?

CASTRO: No. I am a Marxist, and as a Marxist, I believe that revolutions are engendered by a state of misery and desperation among the masses. And that is not the situation of all the people of the United States, but of only a minority, especially the Negroes. Only the masses can bring about a change of social structure, and the masses decide to make those great changes only when their situation is one of desperation. Many years could pass without that happening to the masses of the United States.

In reality, the struggle between the classes is not being conducted inside the United States. It is being conducted outside U.S. borders, in Vietnam, in Santo Domingo, in Venezuela and in certain other countries, including Cuba. Though I understand that a certain amount of protest and dissent is being heard in some North American universities, it is not the masses of the U.S. who fight today against the North American capitalists, because U.S. citizens have a rela-

are not suffering from hunger or misery. The ones who are fighting against the capitalists of the United States are the masses in the rest of the world who do live in conditions of hunger and poverty. And just as I say to you that nobody can imagine a social revolution in the United States in the near future, in the same way nobody can deny that a social revolution is taking place in the rest of the poor and underdeveloped world against the North American capitalists. In all parts of the world you see that the most repressive and reactionary governments are backed by the political and military power of the North American capitalists.

This foreign policy, which monopolistic capital imposes, is a ruinous one for the people of the United States. The United States had some 30 billion dollars in gold in its reserves at the end of the Second World War; in 20 years it has used up more than half of those reserves. [According to the Treasury Department, U.S. gold reserves diminished from \$20,083,000,000 to \$14,587,000,000 between 1945 and 1965.—Ed.] What has it been used for? With what benefits for the people of the United States? Does the United States perhaps have more friends now than before? In the United States, many people proclaim that they are defending liberty in other countries. But what kind of liberty is it that they are defending, that nobody is grateful to them, that nobody appreciates this alleged defense of their liberties? What has happened in Korea, in Formosa, in South Vietnam? What country has prospered and has achieved peace and political stability under that protection from the United States? [Japan, West Germany and Formosa, among others.—Ed.] What solutions has it found for the great problems of the world? The United States has spent fabulous resources pursuing that policy; it will be able to spend less and less, because its gold reserves are being exhausted. Is the influence of the United States greater now, perhaps, than it was 20 years ago, when the War ended? Nobody could say so. It is a certainty that for 20 years, under the pretext of the struggle against communism, the United States has been carrying out a repressive and reactionary policy in the international field, without having resolved the problems of a single underdeveloped country in the world.

PLAYBOY: Wherever the U.S. has intervened militarily since World War Two, it has been to defend the underdeveloped nations from the threat of Communist subversion or aggression.

CASTRO: Why does it regard communism as a threat?

PLAYBOY: To put it simply, our Government's position is that the goal of international communism is to enslave peoples, not to liberate them.

CASTRO: That is an absolutely erroneous

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point of view. The United States wants to "liberate" Cuba from communism; but in reality, Cuba doesn't want to be "liberated" from communism. In order to "liberate" Cuba from communism, the United States organized the followers of Batista, the most reactionary people of this country—torturers, conspirators, thieves, exploiters of all types. It organized them, trained them and armed them in order to come to "liberate" the people of Cuba. But none of those counterrevolutionaries had ever considered the needs of the Cuban people. They hadn't solved the problem of unemployment, ignorance, the lack of medical care, the poverty and misery that existed before the revolution.

Tell me, for what purpose did the United States come to "liberate" us at the Bay of Pigs? To re-establish the power of the landowners, of thieves, of torturers, of the managers of its monopolistic businesses? In what sense can that be called liberty? The United States says that it fights to defend liberty in Vietnam. Can anyone believe that if the people of Vietnam did not support the revolution, they could have resisted as they have? What kind of liberty is that which the United States wants to impose on people at the point of a bayonet? What kind of liberty is that which the United States wants to impose in Santo Domingo, invading the country with its Marines, violating the sovereignty of the country? What kind of liberty is that which the United States seeks to impose upon people against their will? What right does the United States have to impose that kind of liberty on anybody? It seems to me that these lofty rationales for U.S. interventionism are simply words. Perhaps there are many people in the United States who believe them in good faith; but outside the United States, nobody believes them.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of interventionism, why does Cuba actively aid and abet revolutionary movements in other countries?

CASTRO: I believe it is the duty of all revolutionary governments to help all the forces of liberation in whatever part of the world.

PLAYBOY: What kind of aid does your country give to such movements?

CASTRO: Each country helps in whatever way it can. I don't think that anybody ought to say how he does it.

PLAYBOY: Did Cuba help the revolution in Santo Domingo in any way, either before or during the fight?

CASTRO: Help in what sense? If you ask whether the Cuban revolution exerts some influence by its example upon the revolutionaries of other countries, I would say yes. The example of Cuba influences revolutionary events elsewhere in the world. But we had nothing to do directly with the Dominican revolution, although we sympathized with the Dominican revolutionaries—with all

and elsewhere, but without having had any contact or relations with them. PLAYBOY: You must be aware that one reason for the U.S. intervention in Santo Domingo was supposedly in order to prevent the spread of Castroism.

CASTRO: If you hadn't intervened, perhaps leaders would have appeared there who are not as bad as Fidel Castro.

PLAYBOY: In a 1961 newspaper interview, you said that one of the points you would consider as a basis for negotiations with the United States would be the question of abandoning Cuban assistance to revolutionary movements in other Latin-American countries. Is this no longer your position?

CASTRO: What I said at that time was that our country was ready to live by norms of an international character, obeyed and accepted by all, of nonintervention in the internal affairs of the other countries. But I believe that this formula should not be limited to Cuba. Bringing that concept up to date, I can say to you that we would gladly discuss our problems with the United States within the framework of a world policy of peace, but we have no interest in discussing them independently of the international situation. We are not interested in negotiating our differences while the U.S. is intervening in Santo Domingo, in Vietnam and elsewhere, while it is playing the role of repressive international policeman against revolutionary movements. While this is going on, we prefer to run the same risks that all the other countries are running, and have no desire to live in peace with the U.S. We have no right to view our own problems independently of the rest of the world. Such a policy would greatly weaken the small countries that have problems with the imperialists.

What is the strategy of the Pentagon, that they think they can carry out that policy with impunity? It is the idea of nuclear equilibrium; their hypothesis is that the outbreak of a thermonuclear war is impossible, given their massive destructive power and the inevitability of mutual annihilation, and that this leaves its hand free to wage wars of another kind, conventional local wars, campaigns of limited repression, etc. Well, in the same way, we revolutionaries believe that the revolutionary war can be developed without danger of nuclear war. That is, the counterpart of the present interventionist strategy of the United States—limited reprisals and local wars—is our policy of giving full support to the wars of liberation of all the peoples who want to free themselves from imperialism.

Before long, the United States will find itself required to overextend its forces in order to fight interventionist wars of a universally hateful nature against the revolutionary movements in

and itself increasingly alone, isolated and repudiated by world opinion. The revolutionary movement will break out sooner or later in all oppressed and exploited countries, and even if "nuclear equilibrium" creates a situation in which thermonuclear war would really be increasingly difficult, because neither side wants it, the United States will inevitably lose the fight against the revolutionary movement anyway, simply because objective social and historical conditions extraordinarily favor that struggle of the underdeveloped peoples.

PLAYBOY: Since you've brought up the subject of "nuclear equilibrium," perhaps we could discuss the Missile Crisis of October 1962. At what point was the decision taken, and upon whose initiative, to install Russian ground-to-ground nuclear missiles in Cuba?

CASTRO: Naturally, the missiles would not have been sent in the first place if the Soviet Union had not been prepared to send them. But they wouldn't have been sent if we had not felt the need for some measure that would unquestionably protect the country. We made the decision at a moment when we thought that concrete measures were necessary to paralyze the plans of aggression of the United States, and we posed this necessity to the Soviet Union.

PLAYBOY: And the Soviet response was simply that the missiles would be sent immediately?

CASTRO: Yes.

PLAYBOY: In retrospect, thinking about all that ensued as a result of that move, have you any regrets about the decision?

CASTRO: Actually, no.

PLAYBOY: When the U.S. and Russia came to an agreement that the missiles would be removed, did Cuba have any influence by which she might have kept them?

CASTRO: It would have been at the cost of a complete break with the Soviet Union, and that would have been really absurd on our part.

PLAYBOY: But wasn't there great popular sentiment in Cuba for keeping the missiles?

CASTRO: All of us were advocates of keeping the missiles in Cuba. Furthermore, the possibility that the Soviet Union would withdraw them was an alternative that had never entered our minds. That doesn't mean that we would have opposed to the death any solution whatsoever, but we would have preferred a more satisfactory solution, with the participation of Cuba in the discussions.

PLAYBOY: What might have been an alternative solution?

CASTRO: At that moment, we were advocates of confronting the events. We felt that we had a clear right as a sovereign country to adopt measures that were pertinent to our defense, and we were absolutely opposed to accepting the de-

lands of the United States, which in our country contained the rights of our country. I asked myself: What right does the United States have to protest against those installations here, while in Italy, in Turkey, in the vicinity of the Soviet Union, the U.S. maintains similar bases? Didn't this give the Soviet Union the right to do the same? Not only were we acting within our rights but they were defensive measures similar to those that the United States takes in other parts of the world.

PLAYBOY: But why did you feel it was necessary to defend Cuba with nuclear missiles? You say that you feared an American invasion—but there was no invasion of Cuba being mounted at that time; this was well known. And you must have realized that by allowing the admission of nuclear missiles into Cuba at that moment, you were creating a strong possibility of a nuclear conflict.

CASTRO: The danger of aggression existed, just as it now exists and will exist for a long time. Why did the missiles constitute security for us? Because the United States strategy was, and is, based on nuclear equilibrium. Within that concept, the presence of missiles in Cuba would have kept us protected. They insured us against the danger of a local war, of something similar to what the United States is doing in Vietnam—a war that, for a small country, can mean almost as much destruction and death as that of a nuclear war.

PLAYBOY: You felt that it made little difference whether Cuba was involved in a conventional or a thermonuclear war?

CASTRO: On an island our size, conventional weapons with the employment of masses of airplanes are equivalent to the use of atomic weapons. We are certain that such an aggression by the United States against our country would cost us millions of lives, because it would mean the initiation of a struggle that would be indefinitely prolonged, with its sequel of destruction and death.

PLAYBOY: Are you convinced that this is going to happen sooner or later?

CASTRO: I cannot be sure of what is going to happen sooner or later, but we are very much aware that the danger exists. If this were not so, we would not spend so much effort and money in preparing our defenses.

PLAYBOY: Can you state unequivocally that there are no ground-to-ground nuclear missiles in Cuba now?

CASTRO: I don't have to perform that service for the North American Intelligence. They get enough information through their own channels.

PLAYBOY: Then you might do it as a service for the American people, who don't have access to classified reports of U.S. Intelligence.

CASTRO: I do not want to make a declaration that might be interpreted as a renunciation of a right. But if this, as

you say, is a refusal to let the North American Intelligence know of our nuclear tranquility, I have no objection to declaring that those weapons do not exist in Cuba. Unfortunately, there are none. PLAYBOY: Do you think Khrushchev acted in a high-handed manner toward Cuba during the Missile Crisis?

CASTRO: Yes. Khrushchev had made great gestures of friendship toward our country. He had done things that were extraordinarily helpful to us. But the way in which he conducted himself during the October crisis was to us a serious affront.

PLAYBOY: Until that time, you had enjoyed rather close personal relations with Khrushchev, hadn't you?

CASTRO: Yes, I had had very good relations with him, and we maintained those relations as much as possible afterward, because we believed, in spite of the wrong we had been done on that occasion, that the maintenance of the best relations with the Soviet state and people was vital to our revolution. Khrushchev was still prime minister of the Soviet Union. On a personal level, he was always kind to all of us. I have no doubt that he was sympathetic toward the Cuban revolution. But he found himself in a great dilemma, facing factors related to peace and war, and those factors were what decided him. It was really a very grave responsibility that he had. In the end, it will be history that judges his decisions.

PLAYBOY: What was your reaction when Khrushchev was removed from power? Were you surprised?

CASTRO: Honestly, yes. I had the impression that his leadership was stable.

PLAYBOY: How do you think it happened?

CASTRO: I think it must have been brought about by a complex of circumstances, possibly of an internal character. It seems to be, also, that his methods of leadership had changed a lot and were becoming increasingly oriented toward a completely personal style. I might add that at the time Khrushchev was replaced, our relations with him had reached their lowest ebb.

PLAYBOY: With him personally?

CASTRO: With him personally and consequently with his government.

PLAYBOY: Why were relations so poor?

CASTRO: After the Missile Crisis, the subversive activities of the U.S. grew increasingly frequent. In Central America, a series of bases had been organized in order to promote aggressions against us. All of which, from our point of view, justified the position we had taken at the beginning of the crisis. Also, Khrushchev's attitude had changed, principally because of Cuba's position toward certain aspects of his international policy.

PLAYBOY: Are you referring to the antagonism he was stirring up against Red China?

CASTRO: Not to that specifically, but to the whole of his foreign policy, begin-

ning with the October crisis. I think we should have taken a tougher line with the U.S.?

CASTRO: Just that, essentially. The subsequent climate of distrust between Khrushchev and ourselves could never be completely overcome. But that situation has improved considerably since the change of leadership.

PLAYBOY: At the end of the Missile Crisis, one of the points of the accord between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was a pledge by the U.S. that it would not invade Cuba. Do you consider that agreement still in effect?

CASTRO: That is indisputable. The agreement is a matter of both fact and legality. The United States has since alleged that because we haven't permitted inspection, there is no such agreement; but *de facto*, they accept it. They acknowledge that the Soviet Union has fulfilled its part of the bargain. Thus, they are required to fulfill theirs. On more than one occasion they have made declarations that the agreement doesn't exist. But that agreement, as I said, exists *de facto*, and I can say to you that even more agreements exist besides, about which not a word has ever been said. However, I don't think this is the occasion to speak about them. I am not writing my memoirs; I am a prime minister in active service. One day, perhaps, it will be known that the United States made some other concessions in relation to the October crisis besides those that were made public.

PLAYBOY: In a written, signed agreement?

CASTRO: It was not an agreement in accordance with protocol. It was an agreement that took place by letter and through diplomatic contacts.

PLAYBOY: Did the agreement have anything to do with a suspension of American U-2 flights over Cuba?

CASTRO: No, because the U-2 flights continue over Cuba. And not only U-2 flights; they also take photographs from their satellites. As a matter of fact, there is in the world today a kind of universal space observation. I don't think there is any place on earth that is not perfectly depicted. I imagine that the United States is also perfectly photographed, though this is merely a supposition of mine. But I believe that there is not a place anywhere in the world beyond the reach of aerial surveillance. It's getting difficult for the ladies to take sun baths!

PLAYBOY: You have ground-to-air missiles capable of shooting down the U-2s. Why don't you?

CASTRO: When those projectiles were turned over to Cuba by the U.S.S.R., we made a pledge not to use them except in case of strict necessity, for the defense of the country in case of aggression. Because we don't want to appear in any way as *provocateurs*, desiring conflict, we have strictly abided by that pledge.

PLAYBOY: Apart from continued U-2 flights, do any other conflicts persist between the United States and Cuba?

CASTRO: The provocations at Guantánamo Bay.

PLAYBOY: Are you claiming that the U.S. has provoked incidents at Guantánamo?

CASTRO: Yes. They have a rhythm: at times they are more, sometimes less, but for some time now there have been no cases of injury or death. That is not because they do not shoot occasionally toward our territory, but our emplacements now have better defenses; they are protected, whereas before they were out in the open. [Since the interview, there has been at least one confirmed incident of a Cuban soldier being shot to death in the Guantánamo perimeter. The U.S. claimed he had crossed into the American side; Cuba maintained that the man had never left Cuban territory and mobilized all its armed forces against a possible invasion.—Ed.]

PLAYBOY: But Guantánamo isn't a real threat, is it? You don't expect an invasion from Guantánamo?

CASTRO: We don't expect an invasion at any specific place or date, but we are conscious that a very real threat from the United States will always exist. For that reason, we see ourselves required to stay on guard, to devote much of our energy and resources to strengthening our defenses.

PLAYBOY: After the Bay of Pigs fiasco, do you really think the United States will support another invasion of Cuba?

CASTRO: The policy of the United States is modeled on interventionism and aggression. It is logical that we should always be very suspicious. On that account, we have to behave as if that could happen any day. We are also conscious, however, that it is not an easy thing for the United States to launch an attack against us. First, because it would have to employ large forces and cope with a long war in our country, to become entangled in a struggle that would never end. In the second place, because it would expose them to very serious international complications, and they must know very well the things that can happen as a result of an invasion of Cuba, for the Soviet Union has a very firm, very definite stand regarding Cuba. So the U.S. would have much more to lose than to win, and in the long run it would not be able in so doing to stop the revolutionary movement in other areas.

PLAYBOY: If that is so, why do you feel there is a danger of a U.S. invasion?

CASTRO: The United States also knows how risky the intervention is in Vietnam; it knows the disadvantages and the dangers to which it exposes itself in having to battle against an association of superior forces on the other side of the world. Nevertheless, against all logic, contrary

to the simple common sense and decency, they have gone farther and farther down that one-way street that is the war in South Vietnam. When a government behaves like that, what security can anyone have that it will not make a similar error in some other part of the world—perhaps much closer to home?

PLAYBOY: Has there been any diminution of counterrevolutionary activities in Cuba since the Missile Crisis?

CASTRO: No, the CIA maintains its activities incessantly and with all possible resources. It works systematically with all the Cubans who are now in the United States, with the relatives and friends of the counterrevolutionaries who are there, trying constantly to organize webs of information, espionage and counterrevolution. That is unceasing and daily. Much of the news related to the activities of the CIA we do not make public. Many times we know when agents come. We are always capturing agents, launches, boats, radio-communication equipment. We simply don't give out the news, in order to keep them in a state of the greatest insecurity and confusion. They use many different means. For example, they use mother ships to introduce speedboats full of agents, then later come back to rescue them. But because of our improved organization, that tactic has become more and more uncertain. They are now using the method of infiltrating people. When they come to pick them up, they don't come straight from the outside, but place a well-camouflaged launch at a rendezvous along the coast with the fuel and all written instructions concerning its handling and the route to follow. Later, they tell the people where they have to go to find the launch. We have captured quite a number of these launches.

PLAYBOY: What do you do with the agents you capture?

CASTRO: The same thing we did with the prisoners captured at the Bay of Pigs.

PLAYBOY: How many political prisoners are you holding at the present time?

CASTRO: Although we usually do not give this kind of information, I am going to make an exception with you. I think there must be approximately 20,000. [According to *Time* (October 8, 1965), the number is closer to 50,000.—Ed.] This number comprises all those sentenced by revolutionary tribunals, including not only those sentenced on account of counterrevolutionary activities but also those sentenced for offenses against the people during Batista's regime, and many cases that have nothing to do with political activities, such as embezzlement, theft or assault, which because of their character were transferred to revolutionary tribunals. Unfortunately, we are going to have counterrevolutionary prisoners for many years to come.

PLAYBOY: Why?

CASTRO: Well, there are no neutrals; there are only partisans of the revolution or enemies of it. In every great revolutionary process it has happened like this—in the French Revolution, in the Russian Revolution, in our revolution. I'm not speaking of uprisings, but of processes in which great social changes take place, great class struggles involving millions of persons. We are in the middle of such a struggle. While it lasts, while the counterrevolution exists and is supported by the United States; while that country organizes groups for espionage and sabotage, tries to form bands of invaders, infiltrates hundreds of people into our territory, sends bombs, explosives and arms; while the counterrevolution has that support—even though its force will grow weaker and weaker—the revolutionary tribunals will have to exist in order to punish those who undertake such activities against the revolution.

It would be a good thing if the citizens of the United States would think about the great responsibility that the CIA and the U.S. Government bear toward those prisoners. In the case of the invasion at the Bay of Pigs, the revolution was kind to the invaders. It executed only those who had committed atrocities in the past, individuals who had carried out an infinity of tortures and murders against revolutionaries during the struggle against Batista, and who later joined the mercenaries. Only against them, as against those convicted of similar offenses in the war-crimes trials following the revolution, was the most severe law applied. As for the others, we could have kept them in prison for 20 or 30 years. However, on the initiative of the revolutionary government, the formula of indemnity for their release was established. It was, in a certain sense, a moral act, obliging the United States to pay an indemnity for the damage they had done us.

PLAYBOY: Was the indemnity fully paid?

CASTRO: No; actually, something happened there. A bad precedent, I would say, because they didn't pay the whole of the indemnity, either in quantity or in quality. Trusting in the seriousness of the Red Cross, we assumed certain risks in giving freedom to all the prisoners before they had finished paying all the indemnity. We even gave freedom to some North Americans who weren't included in the negotiations. Donovan [James B. Donovan, the New York lawyer who negotiated personally with Castro for the release of the Bay of Pigs prisoners.—Ed.] asked particularly that we free them without waiting until the indemnity had been fully paid. And afterward it turned out that Donovan didn't have enough power to fulfill his commitments. I don't blame him, but I do blame the Government of the United States, because it did

something very different from the situation against other North American citizens who might one day find themselves in a similar situation. I think that they have lost more than we have.

PLAYBOY: How much of the indemnity do you claim remains unpaid?

CASTRO: We have calculated that they paid a total of \$40,000,000 out of a total of \$62,000,000 that was promised. A lot of medical equipment was not sent, and they didn't keep their word about many of the medicines, either in quality or in quantity. According to the American Red Cross, the total indemnity promised was \$55,000,000, of which \$49,300,905 was paid; the balance, a spokesman explained, went to defray "crating and shipping" costs. They deny Castro's allegations about medicines and medical equipment.—Ed.] For that reason, we have refused to listen to any U.S. proposals intended to help other people imprisoned for crimes against the revolution. It must be remembered that the Government of the United States is accountable not only for those who came in the invasion, which was a very clear and very direct involvement, but also for thousands of men who are imprisoned because they had enlisted in the organizations of the CIA. These people will come out of prison only by virtue of the revolutionary government's rehabilitation plans, since the United States is unable to offer them any hope of freedom.

PLAYBOY: You once stated that if the U.S. Government would agree to cease fostering counterrevolution in Cuba, you would consider freeing the majority, if not all, of your political prisoners. Has your position changed on this matter?

CASTRO: We made that proposal because we believe that the counterrevolutionary activity directed and encouraged by the United States is the fundamental cause of the existing tensions and, therefore, of the measures that we find ourselves obliged to take. I am certain that without the support of the United States, there would be no counterrevolution. If the counterrevolution ends, the necessity of keeping many of the counterrevolutionaries in prison will end, too. Thanks to our rehabilitation program, I have no doubt that many of these men will come to be revolutionaries themselves.

PLAYBOY: What kind of rehabilitation?

CASTRO: There are two kinds. One is for persons living in rural areas who collaborated with the counterrevolutionary bands that were operating in the Escambray mountains. These cases were not sent to prison; they were transferred to agricultural work for a period of one to two years on *granjas* [state farms—Ed.]. During the period of time between their arrest and their release, the revolutionary government has taken care of all the needs of their families. Upon their final release, they have been and are being

living, sponsored both by the government. The other type of rehabilitation has to do with cases of persons under sentence for offenses against the people during the time of Batista's tyranny, as well as with those sentenced for counterrevolutionary offenses since 1959. Their rehabilitation has three stages: first, the participation of the sentenced person in agricultural work, study and other activities; a second stage in which he is allowed to visit his family periodically; and a third stage when he is paroled.

PLAYBOY: Most penal institutions with rehabilitation programs concentrate on teaching manual crafts, clerical skills and business administration. Why do you place such emphasis on agricultural training?

CASTRO: You must understand what agricultural development means to our country. It means the quickest satisfaction of the fundamental needs of the people: food, clothing and shelter. It means the immediate utilization of the major natural resources that our country possesses.

PLAYBOY: What are they?

CASTRO: The resources of our soil and of our climate. Our being situated in a semitropical zone offers us exceptional conditions for cultivating certain crops. For example, there is no other country in the world, in my opinion, that has the natural conditions for the production of sugar cane that Cuba has. We also possess exceptional conditions for livestock production. We are able to make use of pastures all year round, and I think our per-acre productivity of meat and milk can be double that of any industrialized country of Europe; likewise, tropical fruits, which are becoming more and more in demand in the world. We also have good conditions for growing winter vegetables, fibers and precious woods, including some types that are found only on our soil. With these natural resources, and with a relatively small investment in farm machinery, seeds, fertilizers and insecticides, and with the labor of the people, we will be able in a very short time to recover our investments and at the same time obtain a considerable surplus for exportation.

Of course, the possibilities of which I am speaking also existed before the revolution. That is, the natural conditions were the same. What was lacking? Markets. We lacked both internal and external markets. Almost all our trade was with the United States. In a sense, this originally had a natural basis—that is, it was an exchange of products that Cuba easily produced and the U.S. needed for products that the U.S. produced and Cuba needed. But it had been deformed by a series of tariff privileges for American goods that the U.S. had imposed upon Cuba. In this way, North American

enjoyed a great advantage over those of other countries.

Naturally, we opened up a little trade with the rest of the world; but under the circumstances, it was far below the true potential, and this caused the complete stagnation of our economic development. In the last 30 years before the triumph of the revolution, the population of Cuba doubled. Yet in 1959, 7,000,000 people were living on the income from practically the same amount of sugar exports as when we had only 3,500,000 inhabitants. An enormous unemployment developed. The North American business interests here were sending back to the U.S. \$100,000,000 a year more in profits than we were receiving during the last ten years before the revolution. Thus, the little underdeveloped country was aiding the big industrialized country.

If you came to Havana in those days, you saw a city with many businesses, many neon signs, lots of advertisements, many automobiles. Naturally, this could have given the impression of a certain prosperity; but what it really signified was that we were spending what small resources were left to us to support an elegant life for a tiny minority of the population. Such an image of prosperity was not true of the interior of Cuba, where the vast majority of the people needed running water, sewers, roads, hospitals, schools and transportation, where hundreds of thousands of sugar workers worked only three or four months a year and lived in the most horrible social conditions imaginable. You had a paradoxical situation in which those who produced the wealth were precisely the ones who least benefited from it. And the ones who spent the wealth did not live in the countryside, produced nothing and lived a life that was soft, leisurely and proper to the wealthy. We had a wealthy class, but not a wealthy country.

That false image of prosperity, which was really the prosperity of one small class, is the image that the United States still tries to present of Cuba before the revolution—to show how deprived our people are today. They try to hide not only the true image of what is happening in Cuba today but also the true image of the prerevolutionary epoch, the image of terrible economic and social conditions in which the vast majority of the country lived. Naturally, we have not made this majority rich since the revolution, but we have extraordinarily improved the conditions of their lives. We have guaranteed them medical assistance at all times; we have blotted out illiteracy, and we have offered facilities and opportunities for study to everybody, children as well as adults. Tens of thousands of housing units have been built, as well as numerous highways, roads, streets, parks,

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sanitized, sewerage systems. We've provided food, clothing, medical care, full employment—in short, everything that is within our means to improve the living conditions of this vast majority, although all this has happened to the detriment of the luxurious life that the minority once led here.

PLAYBOY: And all of this has been accomplished by developing Cuba's agriculture rather than its industry?

CASTRO: Yes. Should we continue working toward the solution of our problems, the satisfaction of our needs, the growth of our economy by investing hundreds of millions of pesos in costly industrial installations? These take years to build and to begin production and, moreover, require thousands upon thousands of qualified engineers and workers, simply in order to produce a few articles of which there is already an excess in the world. Or should we take advantage of our natural resources and, utilizing the hundreds of thousands of men and women capable of doing simple tasks, begin creating wealth rapidly with a minimum of investments, producing articles of which there is a great shortage in the world?

Fruit is scarce, for example; vegetables are scarce, at least during certain times of the year; meat and milk are scarce; sugar is scarce. In short, food is scarce in the world, and the population of the world is growing at a rate much greater than that at which the production of foodstuffs increases. Consequently, a country that develops the production of foodstuffs along scientific lines, as our country is now doing, will produce something for which there is an unlimited need. To the degree that numerous areas of the world become more and more industrialized, the position of the food-producing countries improves, because it is easier for an industrialized country to produce an automobile than to produce a bull.

So we have come to the conclusion that our main source of immediate returns lies in agriculture, in which we must invest our present resources while we are preparing the people for the development of other lines of industry that will require a higher level of technique and investment. This means that until the year 1970, we will devote ourselves fundamentally to the development of agriculture. Between now and 1970, we will actually double our dollar exports. I believe that no other country in Latin America has that immediate prospect. Our commerce is growing; confidence in our economy is being strengthened, and at this moment, when prices for sugar on the world market are lower than ever before, in Cuba there are no layoffs of laborers, nor centers of sugar production shut down, nor lowering of wages such as in Peru, in Brazil, in Santo Domingo—which in great measure caused the

discontent that gave rise to the revolution. We produced more sugar; we have raised wages, and instead of closing sugar centers, we are increasing the planting of sugar cane and the number of sugar mills. What allows us to do this? The vast market that we have for sugar—in the Soviet Union, in the other Socialist countries of Europe and Asia that need sugar and that at the same time produce numerous articles that we need.

PLAYBOY: What have been the effects of the U.S. blockade on Cuban overseas trade?

CASTRO: The effect of the American blockade has been to require us to work harder and better.

PLAYBOY: Has it been effective?

CASTRO: It has been effective in favor of the revolution.

PLAYBOY: Aren't you now trading with France, Japan, Canada, England, Italy and other non-Communist countries, and even planning to expand this commerce?

CASTRO: Yes, we are—and the United States, under the pressures it can, both against the governments of those countries and against the commercial companies that trade with us, to cut off this trade. [Not confirmable—Ed.] But what happens? Why do all the other countries trade with us? Because they understand that the policy of the U.S. is a policy of suicide. Because those countries, far from following the United States in not trading with the Socialist camp, are trading more and more with it, and are filling the vacuum the United States leaves with its restrictive policy on such trade.

PLAYBOY: But except for Red China, Albania, North Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba, the U.S. does trade with the Communist nations.

CASTRO: Those are fairly significant exceptions. The Socialist camp, including China, is made up of more than a billion human beings. It is a gigantic market. It is absurd that any country that has maturity and experience should abandon such an opportunity. By renouncing the fullest possibilities of selling to the vast markets in the Socialist camp, the U.S. is following a course contrary to its own economic interests. The United States doesn't want to trade with China, so Japan increases its trade with China; England increases its trade with China; France increases its trade with China. The United States doesn't want to trade with the Soviet Union; yet one of the reasons for the high level of the European economy, one of the major factors that has supported the redevelopment of the European economy, is the increasing trade of Western Europe with the Soviet Union. [The U.S. does trade non-strategic goods with the Soviet Union, but the amount is minuscule. Late last year, however, President Johnson asked

Congress to further restrict existing restrictions on trade with the Soviet Union.]

I wonder whether the United States considers going with the rest of the world what it has done with Cuba every time a revolution takes place. If so, the time will come when it will have to break off trade relations with the largest part of the world, with two or three billion human beings. No less self-destructively, the United States engages in a species of international aid that makes it the victim of all kinds of economic blackmail. In support of its repressive policy against liberation movements, it finds itself required to expend enormous sums. The beneficiaries of that aid, understanding the U.S. panic about revolutions, make the classic demand, "Your money or communism," and almost always get their pay-off—much of which goes to line the pockets of the blackmailers rather than to help their people.

The only thing that can resolve the problems of hunger and misery in the underdeveloped countries is revolution—revolution that really changes social structures, that wipes out social bonds, that puts an end to unnecessary costs and expenditures, to the squandering of resources; revolution that allows the people of underdeveloped nations to devote themselves to planned and peaceful work. A time will come when the United States will understand that only those countries in which a revolution has taken place are in a position to fulfill their international financial obligations.

PLAYBOY: You spoke earlier of prerevolutionary Havana as an overdeveloped city in an underdeveloped country. But today it looks to most visitors like a crumbling relic. Its streets, which have fallen into disrepair, are almost empty of traffic; its buildings are run-down; its public utilities are inefficient; its housing shortages are acute. If Cuba can't maintain its own capital city, how can it be expected to fulfill its international financial obligations?

CASTRO: A modern city has many expenses; to maintain Havana at the same level as before would be detrimental to what has to be done in the interior of the country. For that reason, Havana must necessarily suffer this process of disuse, of deterioration, until enough resources can be provided. Of course, everything that's essential will be taken care of in Havana: the public services—transportation, water, sewerage, streets, parks, hospitals, schools, etc. But construction of new buildings—like those lavish skyscrapers that were built before the revolution, to the detriment of the interior of the country—has been discontinued for the time being. Moreover, under the Urban Reform Law of 1960, all rents were reduced and many people are now paying no rent at all.

PLAYBOY: How does the law work?

CASTRO: First, rents on all dwellings were reduced. Second, people living in houses that had been built 20 years or more before 1960 were required to pay rent for only five more years. In the more modern buildings, they would have to pay longer, up to a maximum of 20 years for the most recent ones. Third, in all new housing, the occupants pay a flat rent of ten percent of the family income. At the end of 1965, the first five years of the Urban Reform were concluded, and around 80 percent of the urban population then owned their own homes and ceased paying rent. One result of this is that urban family incomes have increased by tens of millions of pesos.

PLAYBOY: But there is still a severe housing shortage in Havana, isn't there? We've heard about couples who have been engaged for two or three years and are still living with their families, waiting for an apartment to become available so that they can get married.

CASTRO: If the resources were invested in the construction of the housing required to satisfy the needs of Havana, all the rest of the island would have to be sacrificed. Moreover, the number of young persons who have jobs today and are leading their own lives has considerably increased. Before, it was very rare for a boy 17 or 18 years old to be thinking of getting married. Many young people had to wait till they finished their studies at the university, and many others had to wait until they could find a job. Today, the boy works and the girl works. So the number of marriages, as well as the number of births, has increased considerably.

PLAYBOY: Is the scarcity of living quarters in the cities one of the reasons you have permitted the continuation of that old Cuban institution, the *posada* [a government-run chain of motel-like establishments where young Cuban couples go to make love—for a nominal fee and no questions asked—Ed.]?

CASTRO: Well, that is a much more complex problem. I don't know whether you

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have the analysis of that problem, too. The problem of the *posadas* poses a series of questions of a human kind that will have to be analyzed in the future. Traditions and customs can clash somewhat with new social realities, and the problems of sexual relations in youth will require more scientific attention. But the discussion of that problem has not yet been made the order of the day. Neither customs nor traditions can be changed easily, nor can they be dealt with superficially. I believe that new realities—social, economic and cultural—will determine new conditions and new concepts of human relations.

PLAYBOY: Concepts shorn of the strict religious traditions that still form the

basis of prevailing Cuban attitudes? CASTRO: I think it's not only a matter of religious traditions, which naturally have an influence, but also of certain Spanish customs, which are stricter in this respect than, for example, Anglo-Saxon traditions. Naturally, those centers to which you refer have been in operation because they satisfy a social need. Closing them would make no sense. But what has definitely been fought is prostitution. That is a vicious, corrupt, cruel thing, a dead weight that generally affects women of humble origin, who for an infinite number of economic and social reasons wind up in that life. The revolution has been eliminating it, not in an abrupt, drastic, radical way, but progressively, trying to give employment and educational opportunities to the women so that they might learn other skills that would permit them to work and earn their living in a different manner. This has advanced slowly but very effectively. This, too, raises the future necessity of approaching the problems of sexual relations in a different way. But we believe that these are problems of the future, and they are problems that cannot be determined by decree—not at all. I believe that people are developing new concepts as a result of a more scientific training, of a superior culture, of the abolition of certain prejudices; and all this is taking place gradually, as has happened in other countries.

PLAYBOY: We have heard that dogmatic ideological indoctrination is part of what you call the "superior culture" with which Cuba's younger generation is being instilled—an indoctrination that brands "deviationist" thinking as subversive and counterrevolutionary. Is this true?

CASTRO: The education of the students depends mostly upon the level of training and capability of the teacher. That is, it is not a question of policy. But it's true that the conditions under which we have lived are not normal ones; they are conditions of violent class struggle, clashes of ideas, of judgments, of emotions. All this can contribute to the creation of a certain atmosphere of inhibition. However, this was not what we were concerned about in those first days. What concerned us much more was to open schools in places where there were no schools, to provide teachers where there were no teachers, simply to teach the ABCs. I think the time has come, however, to begin addressing ourselves seriously to the problem you've raised, which is now becoming very relevant, indeed. We must make sure that the children now in elementary school, who are going to be the future intellectuals, the future citizens of our country, should not be educated in a dogmatic way.

their capacity to think and to judge for themselves.

PLAYBOY: How do you reconcile that view with the fact that a young man cannot enter the university in Cuba unless he is a revolutionary?

CASTRO: Well, there is no regulation to that effect, but there is a policy that is applied through the students' organizations that requires at least that one not be counterrevolutionary. To train a university-educated technician costs thousands upon thousands of pesos. Who pays for that? The people. Should we train technicians who are later going to leave to work in the United States? I don't believe that is right. In making this expenditure, the country has the right to guarantee that it is training technicians who are going to serve the country. The future intellectuals of the country are being educated in the university, and without any hesitation, we must try to see that those intellectuals are revolutionaries. But a boy doesn't have to be a Marxist-Leninist in order to study at the university. For example, a Catholic boy can enroll; a Protestant boy can enroll.

PLAYBOY: To what extent does the curriculum in Cuban schools include political indoctrination?

CASTRO: What you call political indoctrination would perhaps be more correctly called social education; after all, our children are being educated to live in a Communist society. From an early age, they must be discouraged from every egotistical feeling in the enjoyment of material things, such as the sense of individual property, and be encouraged toward the greatest possible common effort and the spirit of cooperation. Therefore, they must receive not only instruction of a scientific kind but also education for social life and a broad general culture.

PLAYBOY: Is this "culture" to which they are exposed selected from a political point of view?

CASTRO: Of course, some knowledge is of a universal kind, but other subjects that are taught may be influenced by a definite conception. For instance, history cannot be taught as a simple repetition of events that have occurred without any interrelationship, in an accidental way. We have a scientific conception of history and of the development of human society, and, of course, in some subjects there is and will be influence by our philosophy.

PLAYBOY: Is there an attempt to teach such subjects as art and literature, and their criticism, from the Marxist point of view?

CASTRO: We have very few qualified people as yet who could even try to give a Marxist interpretation of the problems of art. But as a revolutionary, it is my understanding that one of our fundamental

McCarthy era more than

10 years ago.

MR. T.: I think it's still true to a great extent. Criticisms are made in the United States, yes, but *within* the system, not against it. The system is something sacred, untouchable, against which only a few genuine and intransigent exceptions dare to express themselves. I admit that our press is deficient in this respect. I don't believe that this lack of criticism is a healthy thing. Rather, dissent is a very useful and positive instrument, and I think that all of us must learn to make use of it.

PLAYBOY: Does that mean you will permit criticism of the revolution?

CASTRO: Criticism, yes—but not work in the service of the enemy or of the counterrevolution.

PLAYBOY: Who is to decide which criticism is constructive and which is counter-revolutionary?

CASTRO: The party decides, the political power, the revolutionary power. You must understand that we are in the midst of a more-or-less open war; under such circumstances, all else must be subordinated to the struggle for survival.

PLAYBOY: Even freedom of speech?

CASTRO: When the United States has been faced with similar emergencies, what they have always done is to repress without consideration all those who opposed the interests of the country while it was at war.

PLAYBOY: That certainly isn't true of the war in Vietnam.

CASTRO: That isn't a declared, total war. When you were at war against the Nazis, however, you had such a policy. In any case, when we no longer live under what amounts to a state of siege, when the U.S. abandons its imperialistic designs of "liberating" Cuba, the causes that require such severe repressive measures will actually disappear. Until then, it would not pay to delude ourselves that journalism can have any function more important than that of contributing to the political and revolutionary goals of our country. We have a program, an objective to fulfill, and that objective essentially controls the activity of the journalists. I would say that it essentially controls the labor of all intellectual workers. I'm not going to deny it.

PLAYBOY: This brings up a commonly held view in the U.S. that you are an absolute dictator, that not only intellectuals but the Cuban people have no voice in their government, and that there is no sign that this is going to change. Would you comment?

CASTRO: As far as the people having a voice in government is concerned, we are Marxists and look upon the state as an instrument of the ruling class to exercise power. In Cuba, the ruling class

consists of the workers and peasants; that is of the proletariat and the workers, directed by a party that is composed of the best men from among them. We organize our party with the participation of all the workers in all the fields of labor, who express their opinions in a completely free way, in assemblies, proposing and supporting those they believe should be members of the party or opposing those they believe should not be. You also asked about power concentrated in one person. The question is: In leading the people, have I acted in a unilateral manner? Never! All the decisions that have been made, absolutely all of them, have been discussed among the principal leaders of the revolution. Never would I have felt satisfied with a single measure if it had been the result of a personal decision. Furthermore, I have learned from experience that one must never be absolutely certain that the decisions he makes or the ideas he cherishes are always correct. Often one can have a point of view that leaves out certain factors or considerations. And there is nothing more useful or positive or practical, when a decision is going to be made on an important issue, than hearing everybody else's opinions.

In the early days, decisions were made in consultation with the different political leaders of the various organizations. Toward the end of 1960, all these revolutionary organizations were consolidated under a directorate, and never has a decision been made without that group being in agreement. [Not confirmable—Ed.] It is true that the directorate was limited at the beginning, that it was not completely representative. But when the criticism of sectarianism was made, it was enlarged and made more representative. We are conscious that our leadership is still not sufficiently representative, however. We are involved at this moment in the task of organizing the party and its Central Committee. This is the next step, which we will take in order to establish in a real and formal way the broadest and most representative leadership possible.

So if you analyze the whole history of the revolutionary process, you see that, far from moving toward institutional forms of personal power, we have been taking more and more steps away from it: first, by uniting existing organizations; later, by creating the organisms of leadership. And we will follow this course until we have finished creating, in a formal, institutional way, a method of collective leadership. We would not consider ourselves responsible men if these same concerns about the future were not foremost in all our minds.

If we are going to speak about personal power, I might point out that in no other country in the world, not even under absolute monarchies, has there ever been such a high degree of power

concentrated in one person as is concentrated in the President of the United States. If he chose to, that officer, over whom you call President could even take the country into a thermonuclear war without having to consult the Congress. There is no case like it in history. He intervened in Vietnam on his own decision. He intervened in Santo Domingo on his own decision. Thus, that functionary you call President is the most complete expression of the dictatorship of a class that on occasions exercises itself by conceding truly absolute powers to one man. Why don't you North Americans think a little about *these* questions, instead of accepting as an irrefutable truth your own definition of democracy? Why don't you analyze the realities and the meaning of your catch phrases, instead of repeating them mechanically? We honestly consider our system infinitely more democratic than that of the United States, because it is the genuine expression of the will of the vast majority of the country, made up not of the rich but of the poor.

PLAYBOY: The American system of government expresses the will of the majority through a President and a Congress elected by rich and poor alike. How do Cuba's people express *their* will?

CASTRO: By struggling and fighting against oppression. They revealed it in the Sierra Maestra by defeating the well-equipped army of Batista. They revealed it on Girón Beach [the Bay of Pigs—Ed.] by destroying the mercenary invaders. They revealed it in the Escambray in wiping out the counterrevolutionary bands. They reveal it constantly, in every public demonstration that the revolution organizes with the multitudinous support of the masses. They have revealed it with their firm support of the revolutionary government in the face of America's economic blockade, and by the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of men ready to die in the defense of their revolution.

PLAYBOY: But if Cuba is not a dictatorship, in what way are your people able to effectively influence the leadership?

CASTRO: There is a mutual influence of the people over the leaders and of the leaders over the people. The first and most important thing is to have genuine affection and respect for the people. The people can feel that, and it wins them over. Sometimes the leaders have to take responsibilities on their own; sometimes they have to walk at the head of the people. The important thing is the identification of the leaders with the aspirations and the emotions of the people. There are many ways of establishing this identification. The best way of all is to maintain the most immediate contact possible with the masses.

PLAYBOY: The hero worship they feel for you, in the opinion of many outsiders

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state of candidates for whom the people may vote?

PLAYBOY: In your country, people are accustomed to thinking there is only one candidate. In your country, people are accustomed to thinking there is only one candidate.

bourgeois democracy and workers' democracy. We think that our democracy is much more functional than yours, because it is the constant expression of the true majority will. We think that the participation of our masses in political, economic and social problems will become infinitely greater than that which the North American citizen has in his bourgeois democracy, where he is reduced to voting once every four years for one of the candidates that only two parties designate.

We have to create our own forms of socialist democracy. One of the postulates of Marxism is the ultimate disappearance of the state as a coercive institution, once the Communist society is established. To all those who are suspicious of the state, who fear it as the coercive instrument it has been throughout history, we offer this ultimate prospect of a stateless society. I believe that we must continue working toward the fulfillment of that Marxist ideal.

PLAYBOY: What role do you yourself expect to play in the government of the future, once the party is fully established and the constitution is in effect?

CASTRO: I think that for a few more years I will figure as the leader of the party. If I were to say that I didn't want that, people would think I was crazy. But you want me to speak sincerely? I will try to make it the least amount of time possible. I am attracted to many other things that are not official activities. I believe that all of us ought to retire relatively young. I don't propose this as a duty, but as something more—a right.

PLAYBOY: Can you really picture yourself as a retired "elder statesman"?

CASTRO: It is more difficult for me to imagine myself as an old man than as a retired statesman, because of the hardship it will be for me not to be able to climb mountains, to swim, to go spear-fishing and to engage in all the other pastimes that I enjoy. But there is one thing to which I am very much attracted that old age will not deter me from: studying, experimenting and working in agriculture. When I retire, I will be able to devote all my working time to that. So I don't think I will be bored. But perhaps I will fall into the habit that comes to all of us, of thinking that the younger generation is bungling everything. That is a mania characteristic of all old people—but I'm going to try to remain alert against it.

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and men... spirit... instructions. When... as he... ready... the revolution. If... take steps... that they would not depend wholly on the will of only one man, if we didn't take steps to make it depend on the collective will of the nation?

PLAYBOY: Is this familiarity enhanced by the thousands of idealized, inspirational portraits and photographs of you posted prominently in nearly every Cuban home and public building?

CASTRO: I don't know whether you are aware that one of the first laws passed by the revolutionary government, following a proposal of mine, was an edict against erecting statues to any living leader or putting his photograph in government offices. That same law prohibited giving the name of any living leader to any street, to any park, to any town in Cuba. I believe that nowhere else, under circumstances such as ours, has a similar resolution been passed, and it was one of the first laws approved by the revolution.

Now you will see, in many homes and schools and public places, a small photograph in a little frame on the bookshelf or a corner of the desk. But where do most of these photographs come from? From magazines, from newspapers, from posters connected with some public meeting. Some people have even done a business in photographs, printing the ones they like and selling them in the street. But all of this has taken place—and anybody can verify it—without any official initiative whatever. The fact that there are photographs in homes has been a completely voluntary and spontaneous thing among the people. We could have selected some photographs and printed hundreds of thousands of them and distributed them systematically, but this has not been done, because I am not interested in it.

And permit me to say, finally, that I don't experience any personal satisfaction whatsoever when I read some of the flattering qualities that are attributed to me in the press. I have never spent a single second of pleasure over such things. I can tell you in all sincerity that they have no importance for me. And I think this is a positive thing. Because, as a general rule, power corrupts men. It makes them egotistical; it makes them selfish. Fortunately, this has never happened to me, and I don't think it will. Very honestly, I can say that nothing satisfies me more than seeing that every day things depend less and less on me,

I'm not trying, out of modesty, to diminish the role it has been my fortune to play. But I sincerely believe that the merits of the individual are always few, because there are always external factors that play a much more important role than his own character in determining what he does. It would be hypocrisy for me to tell you that I don't have a high opinion of myself. Most men do. But I can say with all sincerity that I am also very self-critical. The masses bestow upon certain men a heroic stature—perhaps out of necessity, perhaps because it cannot happen in any other way. There is a kind of mechanism in the human mind that tends to create symbols in which it concentrates its sentiments. By transforming men into symbols, the people manifest a greater gratitude; they attribute to the individual what is not deserved by him alone but by the many. Often I think of the hundreds, even thousands of men who are working anonymously, making possible all those things for which the people are grateful. Recognition is not divided in an equitable way. It would be an error for any man—and I say this sincerely—to be unconscious of this, to believe himself truly deserving of all that recognition and affection. One must have a proper appreciation of the things he has accomplished, but he should never consider himself deserving of the recognition that belongs to the many.

PLAYBOY: Under the new constitution that you have said will be promulgated soon, will the people have any electoral voice in determining who the collective leadership will be?

CASTRO: We will have a system of permanent participation by the mass of workers in the formation of the party, in the election of its members and in the replacement of those members of the party who do not deserve the trust of the masses. The party will be something like a combined parliament of the workers and interpreter of their will.

PLAYBOY: And will that parliament in turn choose the leadership of the party?

CASTRO: It will be chosen by assemblies or delegates who in turn are elected by the mass membership of the party.

PLAYBOY: Will there be more than one

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